

19 November 1968

THE SYMBOLOGY OF NUMBERS

In order to understand the Universal Symbol of the Enneagram and be able to use its universal language to communicate with a man who also understands it (whatever his background or the language he speaks), one must learn to use numbers as symbols instead of words.

PART 1

In all languages and countries the natural numbers from 1 to 10 have the same relationship as the basis of the 'decimal system', which has been the most convenient form of counting since man first discovered he had ten fingers and ten toes. We were not surprised therefore to find that the Shankaracharya (as representing the most ancient System of Knowledge in the world), uses this symbolism and that it was possible to compare notes with him about the Enneagram only by giving him a series of drawings in which the numbers were apparent, though no words or numbers were used. After a few days we asked for his comments and this is what he said:

The use of symbols is a concentrated form of knowledge, and the use of numbers as symbols is designed to impart more knowledge in that way than can be imparted by other means. Though the signs for the numbers differ from land to land, in India the Symbol of the Circle of 9 points has also been evolved.

Thus we see the Law of Three, which in India is called Trik (which is also the root word for '3' in later languages); the Law of Seven; and the Law of Nine, which is the complete number and contains everything that there is in Creation. All of Creation, the coarse world, the subtle world, the Causal world and beyond that the Absolute – everything is contained in 9.

The Law of Seven (Prakriti or the Creation) is the rigid form of the manifest world; it is expressed by a circle, for it is a repetitive form having multifarious levels which can be seen in individuals, or in general as in the composition of the Universe and the composition of the human being.

It is closely governed by the Law of Three which is repeated everywhere. In our discussions it has appeared many times – states of Being, Gunas, the Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva or the three aspects which *create, maintain* and *dissolve* as used in our Initiation ceremony.

There are many examples of all these. The diagrams you have given show just one way of expressing the inner meaning or philosophical aspect of human life in the Universe.

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In the course of his talks he went into some detail in using our questions to illustrate the meaning of the numbers from 0 to 9 both in the universe and in individual man. One interesting point emerges: though the symbol for zero only reached the West at a late stage in the evolution of counting, yet His Holiness's ancient System attaches great importance to it. One can understand the following sentences in the article on Numerals in *Everyman's Encyclopaedia* (5th Edition):

As soon as distinctive symbols or ciphers are used instead of counters to represent the numbers from 1 to 9, *and a sign for zero used*, the abacus or any other mechanical contrivance becomes superfluous, and the problem of calculation by *reference to position* is solved. Apparently Europe owed the whole of its modern arithmetic to the Indians and Arabs; for the decimal system, or mode of reckoning by tens through the instrumentality of the *zero*, seems to come from India through the Arabs.

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PART 2

'Number' is for most people a very dull subject. Like most skills, the use of the symbology of number is only dull while one is getting into it, but after that it can become very emotional. We can perhaps illustrate this in a light-hearted way by referring to *Hymns Ancient & Modern*. A certain Mr. Isaac Watts, who wrote Hymn No.299, exclaimed with rapture:

Come let us join our cheerful songs
With Angels round the Throne;
Ten thousand thousand are their tongues
But all their joys are one.

'Ten thousand thousand' being '10 to the Power of 7'. This is as much as to say that 10^7 expressions make one joy or 'peak experience'. It also shows the principle of the Differential Calculus in that words are infinitesimal in relation to one infinite joy, or that a single angel is infinitesimal as compared with the Occupant of the Throne.

In Hymn 222, Mr. H. Alford went one better:

Ten thousand times *ten* thousand
In sparkling raiment bright...

and thus maintains that those '10 to the power of 8' ransomed 'Saints thronging up the steps of light' are infinitesimals of the second order (for 10 ransomed Saints equal one angel)!

Joking apart, these emotional statements in fact point to the code by which the nervous system of man does its counting whether it is counting tongues, angels, ransomed Saints, time or vibrations:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Natural numbers n										
1	10	100	1000	10,000	100,000	1M.	10M.	100M.	1,000M.	

Powers of 10 (a^n where $a = 10$)

Thus in reckoning years, the present age of the earth is reckoned at about 3,000 million years, and the mind (though it can count geological time in millions of years) is unable to grasp a million million years, and would have in reckoning further, to use a new set of units.

When counting vibrations or nerve impulses the brain uses *powers* of certain numbers just as we do in many of our inventions like slide rules and odometers in cars. While we have used the

decimal system ($a = 10$) in the above illustration, there is reason to suppose that Mind (whether of Man or Nature) counts in *doublings* ($a = 2$) and this is the basis of the ‘Law of 7 or Law of Octaves.’ It is easy to go from one to the other, for ten to the power of 3 (nearly) equals two to the power of 10; so there were 21 octaves of ‘tongues’ to one peak experience, and an ‘octave of octaves’ of ransomed Saints (2^{24}). It doesn’t matter what units the mind is counting, it will do it in that sort of way. The sensory parts of the mind count nerve impulses in cycles per second (Hz) up to 1,000, but on the subtle level, a deeper level of mind will be counting in kilocycles per second (kHz), and on the Causal level the central intelligence counts in megacycles per second (MHz), and neglects all infinitesimals.

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PART 3

This was the principle that we expressed to His Holiness in our drawings, and it should be taken into account in reading his answers to our questions. Here is his notation:

	10	Do	Purush	Creator (Unmanifest)
	9	▨	-----	‘I will create’
	8	si	Para-prakriti	Primordial Nature (Blueprint)
	7	la	Apara-prakriti	Manifest Universe
	6	sol	Mahat-tattva	Universal Essence
	5	fa	Akasha	Ether
	4	▨	Vayu	Air
	3	mi	Agni	Fire
	2	re	Jala	Water
	1	do	Prthvi	Earth
	0	Nothing		

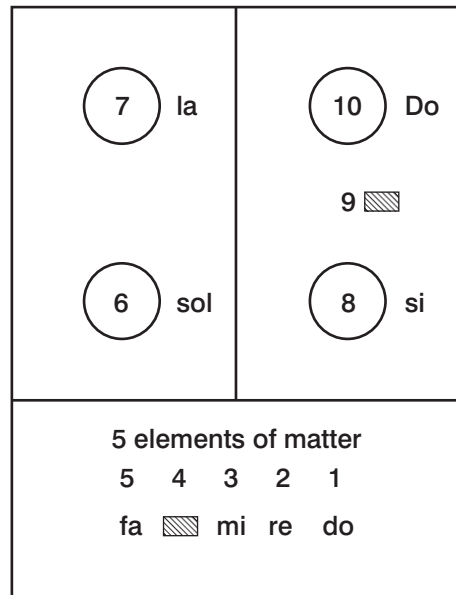
Notation	Number	Law of Seven	Sanskrit Name	English Equivalent
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‘In the Sankhya System, Prakriti (Primordial Nature) fertilised by Purush (the Eternal Conscious Principle) gives birth to the manifest Universe, or it can be said that the Universe evolves from the Union of Prakriti and Purush.’

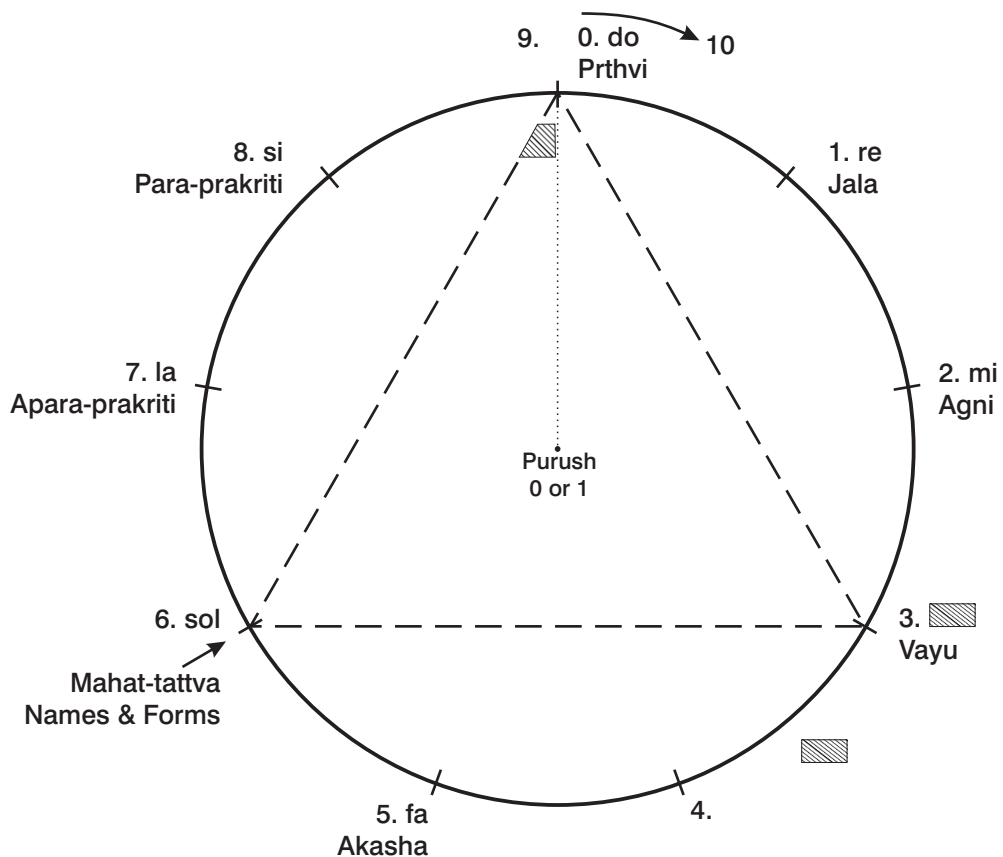
It can be seen that the ‘shock’ which fills the Do–Si interval, can be thought of as the Will of the Creator or the act of fertilisation that brings the Creation into existence.

Similarly, the lower (Fa–Mi) interval is filled by Air which symbolises ‘movement’ or ‘breath of life’.

Before proceeding to the circular measure of the Universal Symbol, we can show his terminology by means of the three-storeyed house (whether Universal or Individual):



Since 'Creation' is a repetitive process which can have as many levels as there can be circles circumscribed about a central Pole, or as there are degrees on the circumference, the proper form which includes everything is symbolised by a circle of nine points:



The points on the circumference show the Law of Seven and the Triangle shows the Law of Three which fills the intervals.

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